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THE COMMERCIAL FISHING INDUSTRY IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

1957

The commercial fisheries of the Northwest Territories are centered at Great Slave Lake. The industry had its start in 1945 and its development has been rapid and profitable.

Great Slave, with an area of 11,170 square miles, is the fifth largest lake on the continent and lies 340 miles south of the Arctic Circle. Whitefish and lake trout, caught both in summer and winter, have an annual marketed value of about \$1,500,000.

Responsibility for the development and administration of the commercial fisheries of the Northwest Territories lies with the federal Department of Fisheries. The Department's field administration is carried out through the office of the Chief Supervisor of Fisheries for the Central Area with headquarters at Winnipeg, Manitoba.

No commercial fishing had been carried out at Great Slave Lake prior to 1944, when the Fisheries Research Board of Canada made the first scientific survey. As a result of this survey, the lake was opened to fishermen in 1945. Catch limits and fishing regulations for whitefish and lake trout were established, based on the Board's recommendations. Because of federal jurisdiction in the Northwest Territories, Great Slave Lake provided an cutstanding opportunity for a program of fishery management, founded on research and scientifically applied conservation measures. It is the first, if not the only, fishery which has been opened commercially following scientific investigations.

These investigations are being continued by the Research Board, and its findings enable the Department to formulate regulations and set catch limits based on sound biological information. Catch limits for white-fish and trout have been increased from the original two million pounds



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(dressed weight) per annum to the present quota of nine million pounds (round weight), the latter divided seasonally into 5,700,000 pounds during the summer and 3,300,000 during the winter. Pike, pickerel and inconnu are also fished commercially, but are of minor importance.

Construction of the all-weather Mackenzie Highway from Grimshaw,
Alberta, to Hay River on Great Slave Lake in the autumn of 1948 has been
an important factor in the success of the fishery, since the highway allows
quick and economical transportation of fish by truck to the railhead at
Grimshaw.

The Department of Fisheries has implemented regulations to ensure that commercial fishermen operate with adequate equipment so that the fish can be kept in prime condition. The Department maintains a system of product inspection at Hay River and at other points on the lake where fish packing houses are located. A senior fishery inspector and a number of guardians are stationed at Hay River. During the summer fishing season two patrol vessels operate on the lake and snowmobiles equipped with radiotelephones, are used for winter patrol duty.

The principal market for Great Slave Lake whitefish and lake trout is in the United States, particularly Chicago and New York. In recent years, ninety-five per cent of the catch has been exported to this market, about fifteen per cent in the form of frozen fillets and the balance as fresh dressed fish.

Total production of whitefish and lake trout and the number of commercial licences issued for fishing on Great Slave Lake are shown in the following two tables:



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Table I

Great Slave Lake Fishery

Catch and Percentage of Quota Caught, Whitefish and Lake Trout (in round weight)

Summer Season			Winter Season		Total	
Year Catch Per Cent (1000 lbs) of quota		Catch Per cent of ('0001bs) quota caught (Catch Per cent of (8000 lbs)quota caught	
	caught % *		%		%	
1949-50 4,642	93	3,987	100	8,629	96	
1950-51 3,947 1951-52 4,272	79 81	3,690 2,531	92 68	7,637 6,803	85 76	
1952-53 4,095	77	2,912	79	7,007	78	
1953-54 3,423 1954-55 4,142	60 73	2,029	62 72	5,452 6,528	61 73	
1955-56 4,845 1956-57 4,436	85 78	2,277 2,165	69 66	7,122 6,601	79 73	
6						

Table 2

Great Slave Lake Fishery Commercial Licences Issued

(1950-51 to 1956-57)

Year	Residen	t Y Non Resident	t Indian	Total
1950-51 Summer		66	20	205
Winter		215	6	397
1951-52 Summer		124	14	224
Winter		180	51	349
1952-53 Summer		114	27	217
Winter		231	75	438
1953-54 Summer		77	24	154
Winter		180	60	348
1954-55 Summer		128	28	206
Winter		211	59	368
1955-56 Summer		165	39	281
Winter		166	56	327
1956-57 Summer		162	3 7	27 4
Winter		129	56	300

In addition to the commercial fishery on Great Slave Lake, there are nearby lakes where commercial fishing might be developed but probably not in excess of 500,000 pounds a year. MacDonald, Nonacho



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| 1957 | 1958 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 | 1959 |



and Thubun Lakes have all been fished for whitefish and lake trout while pickerel and pike have been taken from Kakisa Lake.

There seems little likelihood of commercial fishing for export outside the Territories developing in other waters, such as Great Bear Lake, the Mackenzie River, the Beaufort Sea or the waters of the Arctic archipelago. The most that can be expected from these areas is a sufficient quantity from the domestic fisheries to meet the needs of an expanding local population.

The beluga fishery in Hudson Bay, whose base is Churchill,

Manitoba may eventually prove capable of some expansion, but it will

not achieve the status of a major industry.

Sport fishermen from Canada and the United States have taken part in the sport fishing activities at Taltheili Narrows in the East Arm of Great Slave Lake. Lake trout weighing more than 40 pounds have been taken by rod and line in this fisherman's paradise. Arctic grayling, pickerel and northern pike are also part of the catch of local and non-resident anglers in the Territories.

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